

Amendments to the Drawings:

Figures 5 and 6 have been amended to change reference numerals 54 and 56 (corresponding to the direction arrows) to reference numerals 154 and 156. Reference numerals 56 and 60 have also been added to Figure 5 for clarity purposes. The attached Figures 5 and 6 replace all prior versions of Figures 5 and 6.

REMARKS

Claims 1-8, 11, 15-25 and 29-39 are currently pending in the present application. In view of the following comments, and the amendments to the specification and drawings, favorable reconsideration of the application is requested.

I. The Drawings Have Been Corrected

In the Office Action of April 3, 2006, the Examiner noted that reference characters 54 and 56 have each been used duplicatively. In response, the numbers 54 and 56 corresponding to the direction arrows in Figures 5 and 6 have been changed to reference numbers 154 and 156. Reference numerals 56 and 60 have also been added to Figure 5 for clarity purposes. Approval of the amendments to Figures 5 and 6 is requested.

II. The Specification Has Been Amended in Accordance with the Corrected Drawings

The specification has now been amended to change reference numbers 54 and 56 corresponding to the forward and reverse direction arrows to reference numbers 154 and 156. Approval of the amendments to the specification is requested.

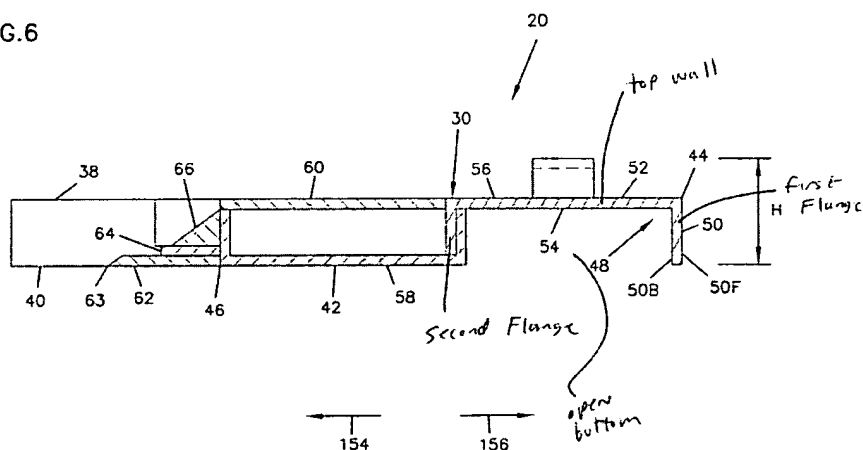
III. Information Disclosure Statement

The Information Disclosure Statement filed on March 21, 2005 included a Communication regarding an experimental prototype. The Communication was listed on the Form 1449 included with the Information Disclosure Statement. With the Office Action of August 9, 2005, the Examiner returned an initialed copy of the Form 1449. However, the Examiner failed to place his initials adjacent to the Communication regarding the experimental prototype. In this regard, Applicant requests the Examiner to provide an indication that the Communication was considered during the examination process (e.g., by an initialed copy of the Form 1449). For the Examiner's convenience, a copy of the originally filed Form 1449 and a copy of the partially initialed Form 1449 along with another copy of the Communication are included with this response. If the Examiner needs additional information regarding the Communication, the Examiner is urged to contact the undersigned attorney.

IV. Claims 1-8, 11, 15, 16 and 18-25

Claims 1-8, 11, 15, 16 and 18-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112. The basis provided for this rejection was that the first channel member and flanges were not described in the specification to enable one of ordinary skill in the art to make/use the invention as claimed. This rejection is traversed. The application as originally filed disclosed a main body having two c-channels connected together in an interlock configuration (see page 4, lines 25-29 of the application as originally filed). All c-channels include a base wall and two flanges that project outwardly from the base wall. This type of structure is clearly shown in Figure 6 (reproduced below with annotations) which depicts a c-channel including a top wall and two flanges that project downwardly from the top wall. Figure 6 also shows that a first flange of the first channel member is located at the front of the main body and a second flange of the channel member is rearwardly spaced from the first flange. Figure 6 also shows that the first channel member includes an open bottom side. In view of the above, it is submitted that claims 1-8, 11, 15, 16 and 18-25 are fully supported by the specification of the application as originally filed. Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112 is respectfully requested.

FIG.6



V. Allowed Claims

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication that claim 17 has been allowed.

VI. Claims 29-39

Claims 29-39 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Bourgeois, Jr. (U.S. Patent No. 4,655,297) in view of Hermonson (U.S. Patent No. 6,283,225). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The '297 patent discloses a convertible spreader grader assembly that is specifically designed to be dragged behind a vehicle such as a tractor. Column 3, lines 27-32 describes that the device is intended to be pulled by a hitch (e.g., a three point hitch as illustrated in Figures 1-5 or a high crop hitch as illustrated at 64 if Figure 8). Nowhere does the '297 patent teach or suggest a connection arrangement for coupling the device with the attachment structure provided on the front lift arms of a skid steer loader. Quite to the contrary, the configuration of the skid sleds 12 and 13 and the relative orientation of the cutter assembly 68 are specifically designed to be dragged via a hitch assembly. The fact that some grader blades can be pushed or pulled does not make it obvious to modify the device disclosed in the '297 patent as suggested by the Examiner, since the device disclosed in the '297 patent is not designed to be pushed and pulled. Rather, all aspects of the design of the device disclosed in the '297 patent are adapted for facilitating use when pulled behind a vehicle such as a tractor. This being the case, there is no motivation to modify the device disclosed in the '297 patent as suggested by the Examiner, and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 29 is respectfully requested.

Claims 30-39 depend from claim 29 and are allowable for the same reasons expressed with respect to claim 29. Furthermore, claims 30-39 recite additional features that further distinguish the cited prior art. Several of the features are described in more detail below.

Claim 31 recites that the end plates have bottoms that are generally flush with the cutting edge of the rear blade and a bottom edge of the front plow blade. This is not disclosed or suggested by either the '297 patent or the '225 patent. The cutting blades of the '297 patent have cutting edges that are either set above or below the bottoms of the sleds. The '255 patent does not appear to have end plates at all. These distinctions provide further reasons why the rejection of claim 31 should be withdrawn.

Claim 34 requires the main body of the implement to be detachable from the connection arrangement and also requires the main body to define a maximum height less than 9.5 inches and a maximum width less than 54 inches. As described at page 7, lines 25-30 and page 8, lines 1-4, this size restriction allows the main body to be readily stored underneath a conventional skid

steer loader. This greatly facilitates using a trailer to move the implement while complying with load width limitations. Neither the '297 patent nor the '225 patent teaches the storing a grading implement beneath a skid steer loader during transit. The cited references also fail to disclose an implement with a removable connection arrangement and a main body to defining a maximum height less than 9.5 inches and a maximum width less than 54 inches. These distinctions provide further reasons why the rejection of claim 34 should be withdrawn.

Claims 36 and 37 recite size limitations that greatly enhance the operation of the implement by allowing substantial amounts of material to be accumulated behind the implement when the implement is used for back dragging applications. These size limitations provide operation advantages and are not disclosed or suggested by either the '297 patent or the '225 patent. These distinctions provide further reasons why the rejection of claims 36 and 37 should be withdrawn.

Claim 38 provides that the rear blade extends generally perpendicularly between the end blades and includes a generally horizontal bottom surface and a beveled top surface, the beveled top surface angling upwardly as the beveled top surface extends forwardly from the cutting edge of the rear blade. Claim 39 further provides that the bottoms of the end plates are generally coplanar with the horizontal bottom surface of the rear blade and are also generally coplanar with the bottom edge of the front plow blade. It is submitted that neither the '297 patent nor the '225 patent discloses or suggests a horizontal blade as recited by claim 38, or a blade that is coplanar with the bottom edge of a front plow blade as recited by claim 39. These distinctions provide further reasons why the rejection of claims 38 and 39 should be withdrawn.

VII. Conclusion

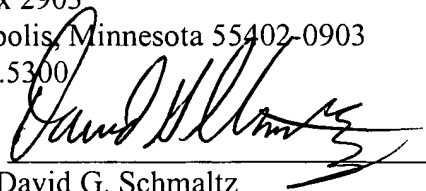
In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is in immediate condition for allowance. Please direct any inquiries concerning this application to the undersigned attorney at 612.336.4617



Dated: June 5, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.
P.O. Box 2903
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402-0903
612.332.5300

Signed: 
Name: David G. Schmaltz
Reg. No.: 39,828
DSchmaltz/aml